

Organization Guidelines for the Pastoral Council of Holy Spirit Catholic Church

I. Parish Mission

“To be the light to our world by: Praying and celebrating as a Eucharistic Community, Serving the less fortunate with unconditional love & generosity”

II. Our Vision

“The Church of the Holy Spirit is welcoming, multi-cultural and multi-generational Roman Catholic Faith Community, rooted in Scripture and Tradition, nourished by the Sacraments and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the light to our world by: Praying and celebrating as a Eucharistic Community, Instructing children and adults in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Serving the less fortunate with unconditional love & generosity and protecting human life in all its stages.”

III. Parish Responsibilities/Areas of Ministry

All parishes are responsible for five general areas of ministry:

1. **Welcome** (Hospitality and the building of community)
2. **Witness** (Religious education and evangelization)
3. **Worship** (Liturgy)
4. **Walking in the Spirit** (Spirituality)
5. **Work of Christ** (Christian service and outreach, especially to those in need).

IV. Mission of the Pastoral Council

The Parish Pastoral Council is one of three major advisory Parish Councils to the Pastor; the other two being the Stewardship Council and the Finance Council.

The Pastoral Council and the Pastor together reflect upon the parish’s mission and ministry. On the basis of this reflection, they discern what needs to be encouraged, strengthened, changed or developed in the parish to make it more faithful to what God is calling us to be.

V. Responsibilities of the Pastoral Council

- A. **To pray** that they may hear the Voice of the Spirit in the voice of the community. Pastoral Council members must represent the parish community and not only their own opinions.

B. To foster the mission and ministry of the parish in concrete ways and services.

C. To keep the Pastor aware of parish progress and concerns.

D. To make recommendations concerning matters which affect the entire parish or significant numbers of parishioners or even parishioners who might otherwise be neglected.

E. To assist the Pastor in evaluating parish needs, programs, and ministries. To assist in strategic planning and guidance toward those goals.

F. To always be truthful and confidential, so that the Parish may improve on her weaknesses.

VI. Role of the Pastoral Council in Decision-making

The Council shares in the decision-making process of the Pastor by (1) gathering information and making informed recommendations to him: and (2) in the evaluation of the implementation of decisions

The Council does not make the decision which is the responsibility of the Pastor, nor is it expected to implement decisions.

VII. Method of Making Recommendations to the Pastor

A. Recommendation is requested. The Pastor may request a recommendation on a significant matter which is either he or the Council raises.

B. Information. More complex matters may require that the Council gather further information, survey parishioners, ask for a Parish "Town Meeting," hear from expert opinion, or generate creative solutions.

C. Discernment. After pastoral matters have been investigated, solutions are to be pondered and practical conclusions are to be drawn. (Canon 511). The Fruits of the Spirit should always be used during discernment not only with the Parish but within the Council itself.

D. Possibility of a number of solutions. In complex matters, the Council may wish to recommend several alternative solutions. Not everyone must agree with all that is proposed.

E. Every member's advice counts. Before finalizing an important recommendation, each Pastoral Council member should be polled in the meeting. The Pastor needs to hear what may be a majority's decision and also alternate views.

F. A vote may be taken. The Pastor should state what he is hearing as a recommendation. If necessary, a vote can be taken to determine what a simple majority recommends. Objections should always be noted.

G. How a recommendation is reported to the parish. The Pastor may need time for further reflection upon the recommendation or he may accept the recommendation immediately. In reporting to the parish any recommendation, the Pastor should report the extent of the support of the Council and any objections.

VIII. Membership

A. Eligibility. Registered, active Holy Spirit parishioners, 18 years or older, are eligible to serve on the Pastoral Council.

B. Number. The Council consists of 7 members appointed by the Pastor. He may request recommendations from the Council.

E. Ex officio participants. The Pastor may ask certain pastoral staff to sit *ex-officio* at Council meetings. These would be non-voting participants.

IX. Officers.

The pastor appoints one elected member to be the Chair of the Pastoral Council and conduct the meetings. A Vice Chair is also appointed and serves in the absence of the Chair.

X. Terms.

A. Length of service. All Pastoral Council members serve for two years.

B. Limitations of service. Council members may serve a maximum of two *consecutive* terms if requested by the pastor.

C. If a member is not able to finish his or her term for any reason the Pastor will appoint one member to the rest of his/her term.

XI. Calendar Year

The Pastoral Council year begins on the 2nd Tuesday of February. The First Meeting shall be an annual review of the Pastoral Three Year Plan by the Pastor with the Council.

XII. Meetings

A. Time of meeting. The Pastoral Council regularly meets on the 2nd Tuesday of every other month, with additional meetings if required. The Council members are notified about the meeting 2 weeks in advance. Time: 6pm – 8pm.

B. Pastor must be present. Meetings are presided over by the Pastor, but conducted by the Chair or Vice-Chair. The Council cannot meet without the Pastor's approval.

C. Who may attend. Only Pastoral Council Members and *ex officio* members attend the meetings. Guests are permitted at the Pastor's request. Any parishioner who has a concern to be submitted to the Pastoral Council may do so through a Pastoral Council Member. Or, one may ask the Chair for time to address the Council at a meeting. The parishioner stays until the Council has finished discussion with the parishioner.

D. Public minutes. All council minutes are made public as an insert in the Sunday bulletin and posted on the parish's bulletin boards. The pastor arranges for a recording secretary for the meetings. The Pastor may speak "off the record" when necessary.

E. Meeting format. The usual format of the meeting is as follows:

1. Opening Reflection
2. Acceptance of Minutes
3. Tabled Issues
4. New Issues
5. Pastor's Items
6. Open discussion.
7. Closing Prayer.

The pastor has the discretion to change this format if special matters require it.

F. Handling of concerns. All concerns raised at a meeting will not be discussed until the time of open discussion. Concerns may be carried over to the next meeting for discussion.

G. Excused absences. Members may be excused from a meeting, and three absences only are permitted.

XIII. Pastoral Planning and Special Reports

A. Pastoral Plan. After parish wide consultation, the Council shall create and recommend every three years (or less if requested) a Pastoral Strategic Plan for the Parish. The Pastor shall make regular reports on the progress of the plan.

B. Children's Safety. The Council shall receive an annual report from the

Children's Safety Committee in September.

C. Annual Ministry Progress Report. The Council will ask for a progress report from every ministry leader to be submitted by November 30.

D. Annual "Town Meeting." The Council shall initiate at least one "Town Meeting" before the summer to solicit parish wide feedback.

F. Finances discussion. Discussion of parish finances as they relate to mission and ministry will occur in August and other items from the Finance Council will be brought to the Pastoral Council by the Pastor.

XIV. Amendment.

This document may be amended at the Pastor's or the Council's request. Amendment shall be put in writing and voted upon at the next meeting. A simple majority is needed to amend.

Pastoral Council Timeline

February Meeting:	Introductions and Review of Organizational guidelines.
April Meeting:	Conduct a "Town Meeting" of the parish.
June Meeting:	Discussion of the Parish Strategic Plan.
August Meeting:	Discuss Parish Finances as relates to mission and ministry.
October Meeting:	Review every Ministry Annual Report to be sure each ministry is striving toward our mission and vision and strategic goals.
December Meeting:	Meeting with Finance and Stewardship Councils